



# EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



## WEEK IN BRIEF OCTOBER 29–NOVEMBER 4, 2017

### Summary

- A House of Representatives delegation to the United States met with a number of members of Congress, including Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, other policymakers, and Egyptians in New York and Washington. The delegation discussed issues of terrorism, investment, and human rights, in a series of closed meetings over the course of the week.
- The body is in [recess until](#) November 6 and therefore only the ministerial cabinet and committees considered legislation this week.

### Notable Developments

#### High-level delegation visits United States:

A parliamentary delegation consisting of Speaker Ali Abdel 'Al; Ahmed Saad, secretary-general of parliament; Muhammad al-Suweidi, chairman of the majority Coalition in Support of Egypt; Tariq Radwan, newly elected chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee; Hussein Aissa, chairman of the Budget Committee; Marion Azer, member of the Ethics Committee; Karim Darwish, member of the Foreign Relations Committee; Muhammad Salab, member of the Small and Medium Enterprises Committee; and Amr Sedki, member of the Economic Affairs Committee, finished their six-day trip to the United States. The group met with U.S. members of Congress including Speaker of the House of Representatives [Paul Ryan](#), [Representatives Nancy Pelosi](#), [Patrick McHenry](#), [Steve Scalise](#), [Ed Royce](#), [David Nunes](#), and [Michael McCaul](#), and Senators [Ted Cruz](#) and [Orrin Hatch](#). The delegation also held meetings at the State Department and the [Middle East Institute](#). Similarly, the delegation sat down on separate occasions with the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Egyptians](#) at the consulate in New York.

Egyptian state-aligned media reports [described](#) the delegation discussing a variety of topics with these audiences, including the need to disentangle military aid from political conditionality, the importance of aid to the stability of Egypt as it fights a war against terrorists, the necessity for greater military and information cooperation between Egypt and the U.S., the opportunities for U.S. investment in Egypt, the lack of discrimination against Copts, and the lack of threat to civil society posed by the NGO Law. However, the delegation was pushed during the discussion on the recent crackdown on homosexuality and the pattern of human rights abuses; such exchanges were not published in the official reports of the meetings. Pelosi's office issued a [letter](#) delivered to Abdel 'Al on the "ongoing assault on Egyptian civil liberties," which was not mentioned in Egyptian media reports on the meeting.

## Other Developments

### In Legislation:

No legislation was passed because parliament is in recess until November 6.

The ministerial cabinet [approved](#) a two-year extension of the mandate for the Ending Tax Disputes Law. The Cabinet also approved the draft laws related to the 2016–17 budget, which Reuters' sources [say](#) includes an increase of 100 billion Egyptian pounds to the expected expenses in the budget.

Following open media criticism from parliament and the State Council, Prime Minister Sherif Ismail [issued](#) the Media Bodies Law executive regulations, which were [supposed](#) to be issued three months after the law was passed in December 2016. The regulations did not contain any notable changes to the powers or purview of the bodies as defined by the law.

### In Session:

Minister of Education Tariq Shouqi was scheduled to [stand before](#) parliament to answer 40 questions [submitted](#) to him by representatives, but at the last minute it was [announced](#) that he could not [attend](#) because he is traveling for a youth conference. The Education Committee is reportedly opposed to many of his policies and claimed to have sent him a report outlining its disapproval with the lack of developments in the ministry over the last eight months. Both sides have [reportedly](#) rescheduled the meeting for November 19.

The Manpower Committee approved the government's draft [Unions Law](#) after [discussing](#) it alongside a draft [submitted](#) by Representative Abdel Fattah Muhammad Abdel Fattah. The Egyptian daily newspaper al-Shorouk published a [comparison](#) of the law's text before and after debate in the committee. The bill will now be sent before a general assembly for debate and a vote. The committee also [held](#) sessions with representatives of unions and syndicates to discuss the law before it is presented to the general assembly for final discussion and a vote.

A closed, [joint](#) session of the Media, Constitutional Affairs, and Budget Committees met to discuss the Organizing Media and Journalism Law, the sister law to the Media Bodies Law passed in December. Amr Marwan, the minister of parliamentary affairs, also attended the meeting.

### In News and Statements:

Free Egyptians Party Chairman Essam Khalil **announced** that the party had finalized a vote of no confidence in the party's secretary-general, Nasser al-Qafas. This **reportedly** comes in response to Qafas issuing statements and making decisions on behalf of the party, which he did not have authority to do. Qafas **announced** that he was surprised by the decision and that Khalil has blocked him and his wife, the head of the party's human rights committee, out of party WhatsApp groups and phone lines for fear of their insubordination.

The date of the local council elections, which have been consistently postponed, became a matter of debate after Minister of Local Development Hisham al-Sharif **claimed** that the current political climate could not support the elections, even if the Local Administration Law were to be passed before the end of the calendar year. Representative Muhammad Fuad **presented** an urgent statement in opposition to the minister's view, though Ahmed al-Sageeni, chairman of the Local Administration Committee, appeared to support the longer time horizon for elections when he **said** they would not be held before late 2018 or early 2019.

An unspecified number of female representatives reportedly **denounced** statements **made** by lawyer Nabih al-Wahsh on television that it is a national duty to rape or harass women based on their clothing.

Representative Mangoud al-Hawari precipitated a media scandal when he allegedly **assaulted** a female security guard at Fayoum University. Media outlets reported that the guard had prevented Hawari's daughter, a student at the university, from entering the campus because she did not have her student ID. Hawari **claimed** that the guard had assaulted his daughter and that he was only responding as anyone would. Minister of Higher Education Khalid Abdul Ghaffar **called** on parliament to investigate Hawari over the issue.

Unnamed sources in parliament **said** that the government gave parliament a dossier on foreign objections to the NGO Law and that parliament is leaning toward amending it. The dossier was more than 100 pages long. The draft NGO Law from the Ministry of Social Solidarity, which was bypassed during the original debate over the law in favor of Representative Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi's version, could reportedly still be passed if parliament were to choose to do so.

Representative Mustafa Bakri **called** for the British government to apologize to the Palestinians for their crimes as the world marked the 100-year anniversary of the Balfour Declaration.

## Looking Ahead

- Parliament will reconvene on November 6. The body is **expected** to meet through November 8 to hold the final **vote** on the Youth Bodies Law and **consider** committee **reports** on a draft Archaeologists Union Law, Drone Regulations Law, and Police Academy Law. A number of urgent statements and questions by representatives will also be heard.
- The parliamentary delegation to the U.S., which was ostensibly meant to drum up investment and strengthen bilateral military ties, was pushed in their meetings to account for the government's attacks on human rights, civil society, and minority rights. Rumors of potential amendments to the internationally condemned NGO Law **surfaced** very soon afterward, though the author of the law, **Representative Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi**, and a number of other representatives denied that any substantive amendments would be drafted before the law is tested and the executive regulations are issued.



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Egypt Parliament Watch is the most comprehensive project on Egypt's elected legislature, providing analysis of the body's performance in fulfilling its constitutionally mandated tasks, the legislation it produces, and the political dynamics at play.